



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES 70 JOBS IN COLUMBUS COUNTY
One North Carolina Fund Grant Helps Top Tobacco Expand in Lake Waccamaw

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley today announced that Top Tobacco will expand its manufacturing facility in Columbus County, creating 70 jobs and investing \$16.8 million during the next three years. The announcement was made possible in part by a \$150,000 One North Carolina Fund grant.

"Top Tobacco's decision to expand in Lake Waccamaw reflects the strength of one of North Carolina's traditional industrial bases and the ability to modernize to compete effectively in the global economy," Easley said. "We will continue to work to provide the kind of top-ranked business-friendly climate and dedicated workforce that attracts growing businesses."

Top Tobacco LP, of Lake Waccamaw, is a market-leading roll-your-own tobacco company currently with 90 employees. Top Tobacco's brands include Drum, Gambler and Top. The company will expand its manufacturing facility with an 18,800-square-foot addition. While wages will vary by job function, the average weekly wage of the new jobs will be between \$610-\$650 plus benefits, which is more than the Columbus County average weekly wage of \$520 not including benefits.

"We would like to thank Gov. Easley, state Sen. R.C. Soles, state Rep. Dewey Hill and James Hinkle of the Columbus County Economic Development Commission for their assistance with this project," said Claus Platt, Top Tobacco's CEO. "Since 1987 our workforce and the people of North Carolina have worked very hard to make Top the nation's leading roll-your-own tobacco company. We look forward to investing in and working with the people of Columbus County in the future."

The One North Carolina Fund assists the state in industry recruitment and expansion by providing financial assistance through local governments to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. One North Carolina Fund grants require and are contingent upon a local match. Through the use of this Fund, more than 25,000 jobs and \$3.5 billion in investment have been created since 2001.

Other partners that helped make this announcement possible include the N.C. Department of Commerce, Columbus County and North Carolina's Southeast Region, the regional economic development organization for Southeastern North Carolina

For more information about the company and employment opportunities, contact Top Tobacco, 204 Top Tobacco Rd., Lake Waccamaw, N.C. 28450 or phone Jim Legg at (910) 646-3015.

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